

8. (Amended) The temporary ground covering of claim 7, wherein:

the open center of the frame structure [is formed to receive] receives a support projection  
from [form] each of four surface structures attached to the joint means.

### **REMARKS**

The Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to reconsider the application as amended.

Claims 1-13 remain pending in this application. Claims 1, 2, 4 and 8 have been amended to more clearly define the invention in response to the Examiner's objections to claim form. For the Examiner's convenience, claims 1-13 in their present form have been reproduced in the attached Appendix.

The Examiner did not acknowledge Applicant's proposed drawing amendment submitted with the January 24, 2001 Response and Amendment. Applicant believes the proposed amendment corrected the noted deficiency.

Claims 7 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,807,412 (Fredericksen). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection as to all pending claims.

Pending claim 7 recites a temporary ground covering having a plurality of surface structures that each have a substantially planar top surface of thermal insulation and a bottom surface from which support projections extend. The support projections lift the surface structure to form a gap between the ground surface and portions of the surface structure's bottom surface

that do not have support projections beneath them. A joint means (See Figures 3a and 3b) has a parallelogram frame structure with an open center and four locking means that each may secure one of a number of interconnected surface structures held together by the joint means. Each locking means has a projecting member that forms an essentially normal angle with a substantially planar surface of the frame structure. Each projecting member of the locking means interlocks with a corresponding recess member formed in a bottom surface of the corner of one of the surface structures to be attached with the joint means. The open center of the joint means frame structure receives one support projection from each of the attached surface structures. The height of each support projection is about the same as the thickness of the frame structure of the joint means.

By contrast, Fredericksen discloses interlocking mat or flag members that are joined together at their edges by mating protrusions 6 into slots or depressions 8/20, preferably formed as cylindrical recesses 21. No frame structure or frame part is used to connect the mat members together. Indeed, Fredericksen expressly distinguishes from flooring systems using inter-coupling means beneath the mat members (See Col. 4, line 42). Figure 7 in Fredericksen is a partially cut away view of the adjoining corners of four mat members in assembled form. Similarly Figure 6 shows the four mat members in assembled form. Fredericksen lacks a joint piece with a frame part having an open center that receives therein support projections extending from the surface structures. Walls 4 are the walls of the mat members. Hence, Fredericksen does not anticipate claim 1 or any claims depending therefrom.

Fredericksen does not anticipate claim 7 or the claims depending from claim 7 because

Fredericksen does not disclose: (1) a joint means having a parallelogram frame structure with an open center; (2) a joint means having four locking means that each project from and form a normal angle with a substantially planar surface of the frame structure at each of its corners; (3) a surface structure having a recessed member formed in each corner of its bottom surface, that corresponds to and interlocks with the locking means; (4) one support projection from each of the connected surface structures that is received by the open center of the frame structure; and (5) the height of each support projection corresponding with the thickness of the frame structure. All of these listed elements are integral and necessary parts of the temporary ground covering structure of claim 7. Accordingly, the rejection under §102(b) should be withdrawn.

Claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over the disclosure of U.S. Patent No. 6,128,881 (Bue) in view of U.S. Patent 5,634,306 (Polen). Claims 9-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over the disclosures of Fredericksen in view of Polen. Applicant traverses these rejections as to all pending claims.

The elements of claim 7 were described in detail above. Similarly, pending claim 1 recites a joint arrangement that also includes a frame structure or “frame part” with an open center adapted to receive a support projection from each of the attached surface structures held together by the joint arrangement.

Bue discloses rectangular floor panels that include extruded edges with complementary tongues and grooves. These complementary tongues and grooves form locking members to align and connect edges of the panels together (Col. 2, line 37). Pins are inserted into the top of the panels to further hold the connection. There is no frame part disclosed in Bue. Element 56 is

one of the tongues, and does not comprise a frame part such as is required by Applicant's claims 1 and 7.

Polen also lacks a frame part. Polen uses magnetic means and/or tongue in groove couplings to attach square floor sections together (Col. 3, line 42; Col. 4, line 39). Polen intends the square sections to rest directly on the supporting surface (Col. 2, line 59), which is also contrary to Applicant's invention in claim 7 in which a gap between the ground surface and the bottom surface of the surface structure is intended.

As stated above, Fredericksen lacks a frame part, and expressly distinguishes its mat element arrangement from ground covering systems that use intercoupling means attached below the mat elements (Col. 4, line 42), which is the type of joint arrangement structure claimed by Applicant.

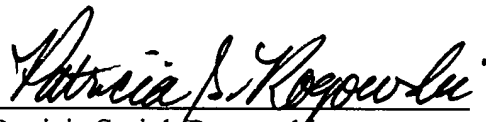
The joint arrangement of claim 1 and the temporary ground covering of claim 7 require a joint means that forms a frame structure with an open center that receives a support projection from each of the surface structures held together by the joint means. Bue, Polen and Fredericksen do not use any type of frame structure separate from the floor sections or floor panels or mat sections. None of the references disclose or suggest the arrangement that has been claimed by the present Applicant. The rejections under §103(a) should be withdrawn.

For all of the foregoing reasons, the pending claims are patentable and should be allowed.

In the event the Examiner believes an interview might serve to advance the prosecution of this application in any way, the undersigned attorney is available at the telephone number noted below.

No fee is believed due. Nevertheless, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any fee deemed due before the Examiner may consider this paper, including any fee for a further extension of time under 37 CFR §1.136, to Deposit Account No. 22-0185.

Respectfully submitted,  
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Enclosure

**APPENDIX**

Pending Claims in 09/402,121

Sub D1  
C1  
1. Joint arrangement for a surface structure, which surface structure is meant together with one or several other surface structures for temporary protecting and covering ground, each surface structure having at least a joint arrangement for removable attachment of one or several adjacent surface structures and having thermal insulation (1) that comprises at least one, essentially plastic based thermal insulation layer (1'), and in which the joint arrangement comprises a joint piece (x), that is to be coupled by means of a locking assembly (y), for coupling of the adjacent surface structures with each other essentially by corners of the surface structures, which joint piece (x) comprises a right-angled frame part, and the locking assembly (y) is arranged by projections (y1) placed at the corners of the frame part and by recesses (y2) of the same shape, that are placed underside the surface structure, and to the bottom surface of the surface structure there has been arranged an integral support arrangement (1a), that comprises a platform structure projecting beyond a basic wall thickness (s) of the surface structure, **characterized** in that: a frame part (x1) of the joint piece (x) has an open center and is arranged to pass recesses (1a') existing in the platform structure, whereby the height of the recesses is arranged to correspond essentially to the thickness (h) of the frame part (x1).

2. Joint arrangement according to claim 1, **characterized** in, that the platform structure (1a) is arranged by single and square shaped platforms (1a''), that are placed over the bottom surface of the surface structure, whereby the framepart (x1) of the joint piece is arranged to embed four

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C1  
sub 2  
C2  
~~platforms (1a").~~

3. Joint arrangement according to claim 1, **characterized in**, that at each corner of the surface structure there has been arranged two recesses (y2) one after the other at each side.

sub 3  
C3  
4. Joint arrangement according to claim 1 in an essentially square shaped surface structure, whereby the joint arrangement comprises coupling means (z) having male-female couplers (z1, z2) placed at the outer edges of the surface structures, **characterized in**, that both the male and female couplers (z1, z2) are arranged at opposite outer edges of the surface structure.

sub 4  
C4  
5. Joint arrangement according to claim 4, **characterized in**, that the male couplers (z1) are arranged by projections being placed at the lower edges of the longitudinal (p1) outer edges of the surface structure and correspondingly the female couplers (z2) by recesses being placed at the lower edges of the crosswise (p2) outer edges.

sub 5  
C5  
6. Joint arrangement according to claim 4, **characterized in**, that the male and female couplers (z1, z2) comprise an auxiliary support/sealing assembly (z3) having counterpart surfaces placed at the upper edge of the outer surface of the surface structure at an angle ( $\alpha$ ), which deviates essentially from the vertical direction, and the counterpart surfaces are directed to either opposite directions or to the same direction with respect to the surface structure.

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7. A temporary ground covering, comprising:
- a plurality of surface structures each having a substantially planar top surface of thermal insulation and a bottom surface from which support projections extend;
  - a joint means for removably connecting the plurality of surface structures;
  - said joint means forming a parallelogram frame structure with an open center that receives one support projection from each of the surface structures; and
  - said joint means having four locking means, projecting from and forming an essentially normal angle with a substantially planar surface of the frame structure at each corner, each for interlocking with a corresponding recess member formed in a bottom surface corner of one attached surface structure, wherein
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- said support projections of each support structure lift the surface structure to form a gap between the ground surface and portions of the bottom surface not having support projections extending beneath them, and
  - the height of each support projection corresponds essentially with the thickness of the frame structure.

8. The temporary ground covering of claim 7, wherein:
- the open center of the frame structure receives a support projection from each of four surface structures attached to the joint means.

9. The temporary ground covering of claim 7, wherein:



the joint means has eight locking means, two at each corner of the frame structure, and  
the two locking means at each corner of the frame structure interlock with two  
corresponding recess members formed in a bottom surface corner of one attached surface  
structure.

10. The temporary ground covering of claim 7, wherein:

the top surface of each surface structure is essentially square shaped; and  
each surface structure has a coupling means, having a male coupler or a female coupler  
arranged on each side edge of the surface structure with the male and female couplers formed  
opposite one another, for coupling the side edges of each surface structure to the side edges of  
other surface structures.

11. The temporary ground covering of claim 10, wherein:

each male coupler has a side projection extending from a lower portion of the side edge  
and each female coupler has a corresponding recess on a lower portion of the side edge for  
mating with the side projection of the connected male coupler.

12. The temporary ground covering of claim 10, wherein:

the male and female couplers comprise a sealing means, having counterpart surfaces  
formed on an upper portion of their respective side edges, for sealing the joined edges of  
connected surface structures, and

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the counterpart surfaces form an angle that deviates from a normal line of the top surface.

- Cb
13. The temporary ground covering of claim 12, wherein:  
the angle the counterpart surfaces form with the normal line of the top surface is  
approximately 15 degrees.